V.—An Account of the Maithil Marriage.

Communicated by the Hon'ble Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga.

With a Maithil Brāhman, marriage is a religious rite; it is based upon spiritual considerations—spiritual benefits derivable from such an union. A Brāhman ought to marry because it is one of the *Sanṣkārs* (purifications) of his life without which he is not "complete", nor competent to do any of the duties of *Girhastha* (householder). He ought to marry because a son born of such marriage will save the parents from the hell named "*Pūn*". A son (*Putra*) means he who saves one from the hell "*Pūn*". Consequently the marriage must be in conformity with Shāstric injunctions. A bride must be more than fifth in descent on the mother's side and more than sixth on the father's,——from the last common ancestor of her and the bridegroom. One cannot marry the daughter of his step-mother's brother, nor can he marry a girl who is an offspring of his grandfather, and so forth. Any infringement of these rules not only invalidates the marriage but is a grievous sin. And as a safeguard against such an invalid marriage, entries of the relationship with names of members of all the different Maithil families are kept from an ancient time by the *Panjikars* or *Punjiārs* (genealogists) of Mithilā. About the fourteenth century A. D., the population of Maithil Brāhmans having increased immensely and having been scattered in different places, and Brāhmans other than Maithils having come and settled in Mithilā, the necessity for more organized action in respect of the marriage rules was greatly felt. It was found that the existing record of the above entries was defective. We have on record that a Maithil Brāhman, Paṇḍit Harināth Upādhyāya by name had, by an oversight, contracted a marriage not in consonance with Shāstric texts. The story is that his wife was alleged to

have had an illicit connexion with an impure man and made to submit to an ordeal to prove her innocence by taking a fire-ball in her hands—a test in vogue in ancient days—and that her hands began to scorch—a contingency possible only in case she was sinful. Knowing that she was perfectly innocent, she solicited re-trial and was tested again. She had used the words—"I have not had intercourse with any impure person,"—at the former ordeal. At the second one she swore that—"I have not had any intercourse with any impure person other than my husband" and this time the fire did not burn her, and on careful examination it was found that her husband was impure because he had married a lady who was not as enjoined by the Shāstras sufficiently removed in descent of relationship. This incident created a deep sensation in the whole of Mithilā. The Pandit Harināth Upādhyāya felt the humiliation so much that he undertook to write in Sanskrit and composed in 1326 A. D. a genealogy of the Maithil Brāhmans and Maithil Kāyasthas which is since that year kept with scrupulous exactness up-to-date with fresh entries made from time to time. Rājā Harsingh Deo, a Karnātika Kshatriya who was then the king of Mithilā, interested himself in the said genealogy and the marriage customs of Mithilā. He not only supervised the marriage being done according to the Shāstric rules, but made classification of Maithil Brāhmans and Kāyasthas according to their religious observances. Such of the Maithil Brāhmans who performed the Agnihotra sacrifices and who devoted their time from sunrise to sunset to religious worship, were given the first place and called the Śrōtriyas; next to Śrōtriyas were the Yōgyas (deserving) who got the second class and next to Yōgyas were the Panjibādhs who were placed in the third class and Jaibars composed the fourth. Rājā Harsingh Deo made this classification with the object of encouraging religious observances amongst the people and to show that in this world and specially so in Mithilā—the country of the Janakas,—the King Initiates—spiritualism should be the ideal of every man. And in order to perpetuate this ideal and render it all the more attractive, he ordered and incorporated the order in the marriage rules

that distinctive preference should be shown to each other by the marriage parties—by one lower in grade to the other who is in the higher grade. And the rules have been implicitly followed up to the present time under the supervision of the Mahārājās of Mithilā. Rājā Harsingh Deo was succeeded in the time of the Delhi Tughlaks by a Maithil Brāhman family, chief of whom was Rājā Shiva Singh, the patron of Vidyāpati, the great poet of Mithilā. After this family became extinct, the Mithilā Rāj was granted by the Emperor Akbar—" *Aj gāng tā sāng. Aj Kōs tā Dhōs* " (from the Ganges to the Himalayas and from the Koshi to the Gandak) to Mahamahopādhyāya Maheshwar Thākur—a Śrōtriya Paṇḍit and ancestor of the present Mahārājā of Darbhāngā who is a Śrōtriya of the highest grade and, by virtue of his position, the head of the Maithil Brāhmans and of the subordinate castes in Mithilā.

A Śrōtriya wishing to give his daughter in marriage obtains from an authorized genealogist called Panjiār, an Adhikārmālā, i.e., a list of persons with the names of their fathers and maternal grandfathers with whom the intended bride has no relationship according to the Shāstric rules and with whom the marriage is allowable. That person then selects provisionally one or more bridegrooms in consultation with his wife and other relations and friends. And having made the selection he applies enclosing the list, under the genealogist's signature, of the marriageable bridegrooms and obtains a marriage permit signed in each case by the Mahārājā of Darbhāngā who, as I have said before, is the head of the Maithil Brāhmans in caste matters also. As regards the other Divisions—Yōgyas, Panjibādhs and Jaibars—the authorized Panjiārs (genealogists) have general permission of the Mahārājā to settle marriages with due deference to the Shāstric rules and local customs. The bride's father then sends a Brāhman with authority to negotiate marriage with the bridegroom's father who accepts or declines the offer in consultation with his son and other relations and friends. While deciding about the marriage, both the parties settle between themselves about the extent of the distinctive respect or reverence due by one to the

other according to custom. Amongst Śrōtriyas the measure of such respect is estimated in rupees. One higher in grade is conventionally supposed to recover from the other who is of the lower grade, Rs. 500, Rs. 700 and Rs. 900 according to the difference in their grades as compensation for the difference between the caste status of the respective parties. This amount is not paid but is merely nominal.

There are eight forms of marriage recognized by Manu, *viz.*, (1) Brāhma, (2) Daiva, (3) Aisha, (4) Prajāpatya, (5) Gandharva, (6) Asura, (7) Paiśāch and (8) Rākṣhas. The Brāhma form of marriage is the one in vogue in Mithilā. In this form of marriage the father of the bride makes a gift of his daughter to a suitable bridegroom, with ornaments, dress and such other property as he can afford to give. This is a pure gift in which money consideration does not enter. Such payment is conventional not only with Śrōtriyas but with all other classes of Maithil Brāhmans ; and it was the intention of the law-givers that the amount should be proportional to the difference in social rank between the bride and bridegroom's parties. But in recent times, there have been some cases where money has been actually paid and accepted. Efforts are however made by the Mahārājā of Darbhāngā and the Maithil Mahāsāvā to remove the abuse.

The difficulties in the way of a vaidika marriage are considerable. The Śāstras prohibit marriage between *Sapindas* and *Sagotras*: a Maithil Brāhmin cannot marry a bride if he and the father of the bride are of the same *Gotra* or if they are agnates of the same family. He cannot marry the descendants of his father or grandfather, paternal or maternal, or of his stepmother's brother. Nor can he marry his wife's sister during the former's lifetime. A bride must necessarily be more than fifth in descent on her mother's side and more than sixth on her father's side from the last common male ancestor of herself and the bridegroom. He cannot marry in the family of a Brāhman other than Maithil. There being different sections in one class, one belonging to a particular section should marry in higher sections or in his own, because if he marries in a lower section,

his children born of such wife lose the status of their father, their positions becoming lower than his. And even in respect of his own or higher sections he should make the selection carefully. Both the bride and the bridegroom should be of noble parentage—noble in regard to family and other connections. All the Maithils are very keen about these rules, and the higher the class and section to which one belongs, the greater is the stringency with which he observes these rules.

The difficulties are still greater with the Śrōtriyas. Rājā Harsingh Deva, King of Mithilā, made the classification of the Maithil Brāhmans, as said above, on a rigid religious basis. They were graded according to the extent of their religious observances. Those who devoted their time, sunrise to sunset, to their religious worship were given the first class. Such personages were only thirteen in number. Consequently only they and their children of course composed the first class and were named Avadāta (white, spotless) Srōtriyas. The importance attached to this class was in keeping with its self-denial. Inter-dining and inter-marriage were restricted to the members of this, their own class. A marriage when it is to take place must necessarily be arranged between the members of that class themselves. If one married in a lower class he was excommunicated by the members of his class. The punishment inflicted has sometimes been still more severe—carried even so far as to disinherit him to which effect there was some years ago a Calcutta High Court Ruling which was cancelled later on.

Originally there were only thirteen houses (families) of the Srōtriyas holding equal social rank and their children were also Avadāta so long as the marriage could be arranged within these thirteen families. But difficulties arose later and increased gradually. The number of the Srōtriyas was very small in those days as can be guessed from the fact that their number—males and females—is only about two thousand at the present time, in spite of the increase in the population. The marriageable places within the limited scope became rarer. As a matter of necessity a bride of the Yōgya class

had sometimes to be accepted with the special permission of the Mahārājā who was their head. The children born of such a marriage, were called Srōtriyas—followers of the vedas—but they lost the distinction of the Avadāta (spotless) as they had inferior blood in their veins: they were considered lower in position than their fathers. A measure of their position had, therefore, to be created and named. They were called Lōkas-men—descendants of the Avadātas and of their maternal grandfathers. The Lauuiks, i. e., the personalities of their maternal grand-parents thus became the standards of their social rank. But a Laukik has, by custom, a tendency to deteriorate. A child will have the Laukik of the parents if both of them are of the same Laukik; but if they are of two different Laukiks, one inferior to the other, then the child will be of the inferior Laukik and not of the superior.

In course of time a number of such Laukiks sprang up with the result that we have at the present time in the Srōtriya class seven sections and about forty Laukiks graded according to their importance. And the members of each section try to hold their place by having marriages in sections higher than their own or if that is not feasible, in their own section. With the social restraints added to the Sāstric injunctions which of course have to be considered first, the scope of a marriage is considerably reduced for the Srōtriya class, the numerical strength of which is small and inferior by far to that of the other three classes of the Maithil Brāhmans. It often happens that the persons found admissible are already married, or are too old or too young or incapable otherwise. These are the difficulties which cause paucity of suitable bride-grooms of whom sometimes there is none or only one or two altogether. Definite steps for marriage are taken after all these obstacles have been overcome.

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HATHDHARI CEREMONY.

When the negotiation for marriage carried through proxy is complete and the bride's father and the father of the

bridegroom agree, both the parties with their select relations and an authorized genealogist meet personally at a place on the appointed day and settle the marriage, and the genealogist mediating between the two parties makes them grasp each other's hands as—an emblem of mutual consent to the match.

SIDHANTA CEREMONY.

The ceremony next to *Hathdhari* is *Sidhānta*. This is the formal declaration by the authorized genealogist in presence of both the parties of the non-existence of relationship between the bride and the bridegroom. On an auspicious day both the parties meet at a place between the homes of the bridegroom's father and the father of the bride at a distance from their respective houses proportionate to their relative conventional rank. Besides a genealogist who is common to both, the party of the bridegroom consists of representative relations whose number may be either four or three or two or even one according to his (bridegroom's) conventional superiority over the bride. Four relations of the bridegroom have to be present also in case he is inferior in rank to the bride. These relations are from amongst the members of the four families, viz., (1) the family of his father, (2) the family of his mother's father, (3) the family of his father's grandfather on the mother's side and (4) the family of his mother's grandfather on her mother's side. The presence at the Sidhānta ceremony of such representative relation or relations is necessary because it means consent of the family or families represented to the marriage. Similarly, on behalf of the bride, one or more families are represented and her superiority or inferiority in rank, as the case may be, is thus admitted. Even in equal ranks there are subtle differences which are expressed and admitted openly at the Sidhānta with expressions such as *Namratā* (humiliation), *sadrabayā-namṛatā* (humiliation mixed with pecuniary offer), and *Artik-namratā* (humiliation to the extreme), that is to say, that distinctive preferential respect due by one to the other is admitted openly then and there. The bride's men are seated facing west and the bridegroom's men

facing the east with the genealogist in between. The genealogist consults and reads the genealogical tables of both the bride and the bridegroom and solemnly declares in presence of the parties that there is no relationship between the parties, and having assured them of the *Aswajana*, i.e., absence of relationship, gives his opinion in writing under his signature, and the *Aswajana patra*, as it is called, is taken home by the bride's father and placed before his family goddess by way of dedication.

Uchhati Ceremony.

Uchhati is a ceremony consisting in due respect shown to one another in a felicitous way by the party of the bridegroom and that of the bride when the former pays a formal visit to the house of the latter and obtains permission of the ladies thereof for final settlement of the marriage. This ceremony is very rare; it is prevalent only among the Śrōtriyas and even they do it only when the marriage is to take place between a bride and bridegroom of the first section of their class, and of equal or almost equal status. The ceremony takes place in the night, night-time being chosen because it gives facilities and is free from the molestations expected in old days.

On an auspicious day, accompanied by the genealogist who acts as an emissary, the father of the bridegroom and his select relations start for the house of the bride's father and when they are at a distance of about half a mile from it, they halt and send intimation through the genealogist. On receipt of the news, the bride's father in company with his relations and friends sends his genealogist to receive and conduct the bridegroom's men. The genealogist goes and approaches them with due respect and says: "If it pleases your august selves to be face to face (with the bride's party) questions and answers can be exchanged. You, Sirs, have taken the trouble to come all this long way. Welcome to you, welcome!"

The bridegroom's party then proceed very slowly, as they expect the other party, to accord them a suitable reception and to come up a certain distance commensurate with their respective social ranks.

After the party of the bridegroom move on, the genealogists come back in advance to request the bride's men in equally respectful terms to go to receive them. When they have started, the genealogists return to the bridegroom's party again, inform and request them in the same words as before to proceed and they thus continue to go forwards and backwards about forty times or so until both the parties are within hearing distance and can see each other. At this stage the parties do not meet or talk to each other; they are required by custom not to recognize each other yet as marriage parties inasmuch as the absence of their relationship has yet to be ascertained again. They remain stationary while the messages are exchanged through their proxies, the genealogists, not in explicit terms but by implication. The genealogist accompanying the bride's party speaks aloud: "In this pitch dark night, what is the cause of the advent of such bright personages?" The genealogist who accompanies the bridegroom's party replies solemnly:

"Great grandson of such and such person, Grandson of such and such person, Son of such and such person, Daughter's son of such and such person, seeks the hand in marriage of the—Great-granddaughter of such and such person, Granddaughter of such and such person, Daughter of such and such person, Daughter's daughter of such and such person."

The genealogist of the bride's father says in reply: "Any mission undertaken by such personages is sure to be a success."

And this said, the bridegroom's party are taken inside into the courtyard of the house and are seated facing the east. The bride's men take their seats opposite to them close by with their faces to the west. The genealogists who are seated to the south between the two parties with their faces to the north, then read aloud and scrutinize the genealogical tables of both the bride and the bridegroom, declare the absence of relationship in the presence of both the parties and sign the *Aswajana patra*, i.e., the certificate showing the absence of the relationship and the consequent eligibility of the marriage. Then a genealogist accompanied by the bridegroom's father and some of his relations, approaches the

mother and other ladies of the house seated behind a screen and informs them of the presence there of the bridegroom's men and of their object, whereupon the ladies say : "Blessed be your mission," meaning their consent to the marriage. The genealogist and the bridegroom's men return to their seats where they stand for a time, hearing the complimentary songs sung in their honour by the ladies. Now at this stage the bride's father and the relations present their compliments (*namaskars*) to the bridegroom's men, wash their feet with water and give them *pān supāri* (betels and betel-nuts) and scents. The parties now talk to each other freely in appreciative terms expressing their joy and gratitude for the settlement of the marriage. And subsequently they take leave of each other and return home.

Kanyakopasthita Ceremony.

Kanyakōpasthita ceremony takes place after the *Uchhati* ceremony wherever the latter is observed, but in case the *Uchhati* is not observed it takes place immediately after the *Sidhānta* ceremony and generally as part of it. Where there is no *Uchhati*, the *Kanyakōpasthita* takes place as soon as the *Sidhānta* ceremony is done and in the presence of the same two parties assembled then and there. A genealogist representing both the parties declares :—

"Great-granddaughter of such and such person, Granddaughter of such and such person, Daughter of such and such person, Daughter's daughter of such and such person shall be given in marriage to—Great-grandson of such and such person, Grandson of such and such person, Son of such and such person, Daughter's son of such and such person, so-and-so by name."

And the consent of the proposed bridegroom to marry the proposed bride is also obtained then and there.

In the event of the *Uchhati* taking place, the bride's party goes to the house of the bridegroom and has the *Kanyakōpasthitā* done there.

After the *Kanyākōpasthita* ceremony is over, the bride cannot be married to any person other than the one already proposed, except in the following cases occurring before the marriage takes place :—

(1) If the bridegroom is found impotent (*Napuṁsak*).

(2) If he is suffering from an incurable disease.

(3) If he is found out-casted (*Patit*).

(4) If he dies before the marriage takes place.

(5) If he becomes a Sanyāsī.

Once the marriage ceremony is performed, the bride can in no case be married again.

KUMĀRA KARMA.

On the morning of the day prior to the date of the marriage the bride is seated on the *Mandap* surrounded by her female relations who apply *ukatan* (unguent) to her body and sing songs all the time. She is next taken into the tank where water contained in a *Konian* (a bamboo basket) with a bunch of mango leaves is poured over her head and body a hundred-and-one times. After the bath she puts on a yellow cloth and distributes sweetmeats, other eatables and *sindūr* (vermillion) with her own hand among at least ten married women. She is then taken to the village deities and offers prayers to them and the party return home. This ceremony is known as the *Kumārakarma*. She takes simple food without fish or flesh (*Nirāmish*) only once that day.

In the same evening at a purified place within the courtyard of the house, the bride puts ten handfuls of raw paddy into an earthen pan. The paddy fried by her own or her mother's or father's sister, with the latter's husband seated by her side. The fried paddy (*Lāj*) thus prepared is used in the *Lāj Havan* of the marriage next day mixed up with *Lāj* prepared in the evening at the bridegroom's house.

The same evening after the preparation of the fried paddy (*Lāj*), the *Saunth-Netāon* ceremony takes place. The father or other male member of the house who gives away the girl in

marriage applies with *Doorbādal* (grass blade) sandal-wood paste to her *Simant*, i.e., the parting line of the hair of her head. This ceremony is a prelude to the *Sindurdān* to be performed the following day and is practically the consecration of the bride's married life.

Similarly some fried paddy is also prepared the same evening at the bridegroom's house by his own sister or the sister of his father or mother, the bridegroom putting ten handfuls of raw paddy into the earthen frying pan. This *Lāj*, as said before, together with the *Lāj* prepared at the bride's house, is used in the *Lāj Havan* on the marriage day. The bridegroom shaves his head and chin, does *ek-bhukta*, i.e., takes *Nirāmish* food and maintains abstinence in other respects that day, i.e., the day before the marriage. Also the father of the bride or whoever intends giving away the bride, does *ek-bhukta* and fasts next day till the marriage is over. He also shaves and observes certain restrictions as to food and other things.

MARRIAGE.

On the day fixed for marriage or on the day before, a Brāhman goes on behalf of the bride's party to the house of the bridegroom and obtains his permission to begin the preliminaries of the marriage, and on his return the bride's father performs *Mātrikā Pujā* and *Abhyudayika Srādh*, i.e., worship of family Goddesses and the *Pitris* on the marriage day.

The brother of the bride is sent to bring the bridegroom from his home where on arrival he (the bride's brother) is properly received, sumptuously fed and given some articles of dress. The bridegroom then starts after having offered prayers to his family Goddess and received blessings from his elders, male and female. He is accompanied by his relations and friends in procession on a scale suited to his condition. On arrival near the house of the bride's father, the bridegroom receives welcome in the shape of complimentary songs sung by the ladies some carrying on their heads pitchers full of water.

The bridegroom is then conducted inside and when he arrives about the south-east corner of the courtyard of the house, he is made to halt and the ceremonies begin again. A respectful offering of betel-nuts and the sacred thread is made through the bride's brother to the august guest. Some amount in cash, Rs. 2 to Rs. 7, is symbolically offered along with the betel-nuts and sacred thread; Rs. 2 being given in case the conventional rank of the bridegroom is inferior to that of the bride; Rs. 5 in case of equals and Rs. 7 in case the bridegroom is superior in rank. After this ceremōny, the bridegroom is taken to the ladies' apartments where they are given an opportunity of seeing him before the actual marriage ceremonies commence. A few questions having been asked, he is approached by an elderly lady who presents a lighted lamp made of tortoise-shell before him. A *Ghūnshi*, i.e., ornamental garland with pendants hanging at intervals is put on his turban, and Collyrium is applied to the lids of his eyes. He is then led round the *Mandap* thrice by the same lady under *purdāh* with a piece of cloth tied round his neck or with his nose in contact with some betel leaves and pieces of red-coloured cotton underneath the fingers of her right hand. He then comes to the south-west portion of the courtyard and there at a purified place whitened with *Alipana*, which consists of auspicious Tāntrik figures drawn in white powder, a wooden mortar is placed and in that some raw paddy is struck three times with a mallet by eight Brāhmans (including the bridegroom) invoking the Supreme Being with the Vedic Mantras commencing with the Mantra "The Supreme Being, thousand-headed, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed, encompassed the Universe and extended Himself in all directions", and the husk is thus removed from the paddy. With the sacred rice so obtained, together with some rolled mango leaves fastened with silk or *Janau*, two amulets are prepared for the use and protection of the bride and the bridegroom during the first four days of the marriage. The bridegroom then comes up the *Mandap* (platform). The bride's father having purified himself by bath and performance of his *Ahnik* (daily prescribed rites) and having worshipped the

family goddess and *pitris* is present on the *Mandap* and gives the bridegroom *Arghya* according to the Vedic rites as soon as he arrives there. The bridegroom then goes to the altar which is close by, a little north-east of the *Mandap* and deposits there sacrificial fire for oblations.

Subsequently he goes into the *Koutukāgār,* i.e., the house fitted up for his and the bride's stay and for the Pūjās of the deities and on his way he halts at the place where the bride seated behind a purdāh, strews down betel-leaves besmeared with milk and he picks up these leaves and gives them back to her in the purdāh. This ceremony which is called *Hāthnataon* is meant to ascertain the extent of the bridegroom's acceptance of the bride. In the *koutukāgār* he is, on arrival, received by the female relations of the bride and after some ceremonies are performed, he brings therefrom the bride to the *Mandap.* Here (at the *Mandap*) she receives dresses and ornaments from the bridegroom while he puts on those given by her father. The *Mandap* should be a raised square platform with sides measuring sixteen cubits by the girl's hand; on the south attached to the platform should be the room where the bride is to reside with the bridegroom, with his back to the west and front to the north: and an altar four cubits square by the boy's hand should be made with bamboos, beyond the platform on the north-east—it must be free of all dust, husk or hair. The bridegroom's father, after having performed his daily religious duties should first worship the sixteen *Mātrikās* (the household Goddesses) and then propitiate the *pitris.* The bride's father, having purified himself by bathing and having performed his *Ahnika* (daily prescribed rites) wear a white cloth should worship *Mātrikās* and propitiate the manes. Taking sips of water with his face to the west, he gets up and addressing the bridegroom, who is kneeling upright, says, "Sir, sit down, we shall do honour to you." On the bridegroom's assenting, the bride's father offers him a seat (made of grass) and taking *Vistar* (a bundle of grass to be put under the feet) in the hand while he declares three times: "Here is the *Vistar,*" asks

him to accept it. The bridegroom accepts it and holding the *Vistar* says, "I am of the noblest lineage among the people of my clan, even as the sun is among those that rise in the firmament. I tread on whosoever is jealous of me." Saying this he sits down on the *Asana* or the seat with the *Vistar* pointing to the north. The host resuming his seat takes some water (for washing the feet) in the hollow made by joining his hands together (*anjali*) and declares thrice, "Here is the water (for washing feet)." On the host requesting him to accept it the bridegroom accepts it and takes the water into his own *anjali* and washes his right foot with it while reciting the verse: "Thou art the essence of brightness and I take thee for such: let my feet be washed." The left foot should be next washed in the same manner. Again, he takes up the *Vistar* or bundle of Kusha grass as before and puts it under his feet reciting the same verse. Then taking the conch-shell consisting of blades of holy grass (*dūb*), unbroken rice (*achhat*), fruits, sandal-paste and the water, the host asks the bridegroom to accept it. The bride takes it from his hands and utters: "The sacred waters are ye; may I attain my desires through you." Saying this he places some of the rice on his head and says, "I send you to the south; go back to your source; let no calamity befall our people; my drinking water should be left behind." Reciting this verse he pours out the water on the *Arghya* to the north-east. The host then takes the water for internal purification and declares three times: "Here is the water for taking sips". He requests the bridegroom to accept the water which he does, and taking the water from his hands sips it twice while mentally reciting the verse "Endow me with glory; unite me with lustre; make me beloved of all creatures; may I be master of cattle; may my limbs be safe." The host then takes up the pot (made of bell-metal) containing *Madhuparka* (a mixture of curd, ghee and honey) and repeats three times, "Here is the *Madhuparka*." Thereupon the bridegroom, saying, "I accept the *Madhuparka*", looks at the pot in the hands of the host and says, "I see you with the eyes bestowed upon me by the sun."

He takes the *Madhuparka* saying, "I take it from the hands of *Puṣan* (one of the twelve aspects of the Sun) with the permission of the Sun-God." Then placing it on his left hand he stirs it round with his little finger and drops a little on the ground with the pinch of his thumb and forefinger and recites the verse : "Oh ! Adorable one ! I mix you together and separate from you that which is deposited at the bottom while going to taste you." In this way he pours down twice more and thereafter sips the *Madhuparka* three times reciting each time the verse : "I, of polite manners and possessing stores of grain, am going to drink this (mixture) containing the best and sweetest honey." He pours out the remaining *Madhuparka* on an unfrequented place and taking sips of water, touches his (1) mouth, (2) nostrils, (3) eyes, (4) ears, (5) arms, (6) shoulders, (7) thighs and (8) his whole body, successively reciting the following Mantras : "(1) May speech dwell in my mouth, (2) breath in my nostrils, (3) sight in my eyes, (4) power of hearing in my ears, (5) vigour in my arms, (6) strength in my thighs ; (7) may all my limbs live together in safety." A barber having placed a blade of grass in the bridegroom's *anjali* declares three times : "The cow !" The host then proceeds to offer a cow. The bridegroom says looking at the cow, "They who asked me were told not to kill the innocent cow who is *Aditi* (mother of the Gods) ; she is the mother of Rudras, daughter of Vasus, sister of the Adityas and source of nectar. My own sins and those of my hosts have been destroyed. Set the cow at liberty to graze." Reciting this he cuts off the straw and throws it away. A space one cubit square is prepared for Homa in the centre of the altar. This space is swept clean with the *Kuśas* (which are subsequently thrown away to the north-east), besmeared with cowdung for purification and marked over with three parallel lines, one span in length, drawn across with water by the pinch formed by the thumb and the ring finger. The area being thus purified, fire (which has been kept ready in a bell-metal pot) is deposited there silently by a man with his face turned to the west. Some one is left to watch the fire while the bridegroom goes forth and brings the

bride from the marriage room on to the platform. He recites the verse : "Live up to old age ; wear this cloth ; develop thy beauty ; sanctify the bed ; live for a hundred years in happiness ; develop riches and bear male children. Oh ! long-lived maiden ! wear this cloth," and hands over the cloth to her. He also gives her the *Uttariya* (a sheet of cloth to cover the upper part of the body) saying, "May the Goddesses who cut, spin and weave the threads into this cloth, help you to cover your body with it, so that you may live up to old age ; hence cover yourself with this cloth, Oh ! long-lived one." In the same way the bridegroom too wears a cloth saying, "I wear this cloth for the sake of glory. May I live for a hundred years in happiness ; I shall develop wealth and increase my cattle." Then reciting the verse : "May the Earth and sky, Brihaspati (preceptor of the Gods) and Indra cover me with glory. I want not only fame but fortune also," he puts on his scarf. This finished, the bridegroom and the bride take two sips of water each and as the giver away of the bride says, "Look at each other," the pair are seated face to face, and the bridegroom recites the verse : "May the Vishvadevas (the Universal Gods) and the sacred waters unite our hearts ; may Mātārishwan (the God of the Air) Dhatri (the Creator) and the God who guides the way, join us." Then the Janmagranthi is tied by the giver away of the bride into her cloth and the giving away of the bride takes place. The giver, taking a few blades of grass shoots (*durba*), some unbroken rice (*achhat*), sandal-paste, fruit and some water from a conch-shell, and placing the bridegroom's hand over that of the bride recites the verse : "I, the giver, am the king of the waters ; these materials that are presided over by the Sun may be accepted by the Brāhman who is Viṣṇu." Then he gives her away saying, "In the month of ——— on ——— date of (bright or dark as the time may be) fortnight. I give away my daughter bedecked with ornaments, who is the great-granddaughter of ——, granddaughter of ——, daughter of ——, of —— *Gōtra* (sect) and —— *Prabara* (race) with a wish to attain Heaven, to you —— Sharma, the great-grandson

of ——, grandson of ——, son of ——, of —— *Gōtra* and —— *Prabara.*" This is repeated three times. The bride's deity is Prajāpati (the Lord of Creation). The word *tathāstū* (Amen) should be said in reply. "May the sky (*Dyaus*) give you and the earth (Prithivī) take you" should be recited by the bridegroom. The giver of the bride then takes a few blades of green grass, some unbroken rice, a fruit, sandal-paste, some water and a few coins (to be given to the Brāhmans), and saying, "I give this gold presided over by the Agni as Dakṣinā to you the said Sharmā of —— *Gotra* and —— *Prabara,* who are the bridegroom to confirm the giving away of my daughter on this day," distributes the Dakṣinā. The Brāhmans give their blessings saying *tathāstū* (Amen). A couple of cows as the symbol of the earth, may also be given as an alternative. The bridegroom recites: "Who is the giver? To whom did he give? Kāma (the first born child of the Absolute) gave to Kāma; consequently Kāma is both giver and taker; hence Oh,—this gift is for thee." Holding the bride by the hand and saying, "When you go to a distant place with a sad heart, may the *Dishah* (the eight or sometimes ten cardinal points), the wind that blows, the God having golden wings (i.e., the Sun) and the Fire turn your mind to me", the bridegroom leads her out mentioning her name. A man holding on his head steadily a jar or pitcher full of water, should be stationed on the south of the altar till the *Abhiṣeka* (sprinkling of water over the head) ceremony. Then the giver says, "Look at each other." Whereupon the bridegroom recites: "Do not look unkindly; do not bring about the husband's death; be mistress of cattle, be happy and illustrious; give birth to heroic sons; bring luck to the bipeds (human beings) and quadrupeds. First of all * Sōma acquired you, then did the Gandharva. Your third husband is Agni (fire) and thy fourth husband is a human being. Sōma gave her to Gandharva and the latter subsequently gave her to Agni; and Agni gave her to me

* Sōma presides at birth; Gandharva watches as the (*maiden*) passes from childhood to girlhood; and Agni is the guardian of virginity.

with riches and sons. May Pusana make her fond of me (*Urū Ushati vihar yasyamushantah praparam shapan yasyamukama bahabō nioishtyai*) " and after reciting this the pair look at each other.† Thereafter the bridegroom walks round the fire and putting his right foot on a mattress placed behind the Hōma, takes his seat with the bride on his right side. Being seated he takes up some flowers, sandal-paste, betel and a piece of cloth and declares, " I appoint you (names) Sharma as Brahmā to supervise the Hōma (sacrifice) which is a part of the marriage ceremony which would be performed to-day, with these flowers, sandal-paste, betel, sacred-thread and this cloth. " Thus the Brahmā is nominated. In reply the Brahmā says, " I accept the appointment." The bridegroom then asks him to do the needful. The reply is given, " I shall do ", whereupon the bridegroom offers him a clean seat strewn over with grasses with their tips pointed to the east while the Brahmā goes round the fire once and the bridegroom says, " Be my Brahmā in this ceremony." On his replying, " I shall be as you say " he should be made to sit on the *Āsana* which is kept ready. The *Pranita* jug is thereafter brought forward and is filled with water and covered over with *Kuśas* and then casting a look at the Brahmā's face it should be placed on *Kuśas* lying to the north of fire. The 16 *Kuśas* (i.e., one-fourth of the bunch which consists of 64 *Kuśas*) are strewn from the north-east with their tips to the south-east, 16 more over the space between the Brahmā and the Fire, 16 more from north-west with their tips to the south-west, and the remaining 16 are strewn over the space between the Fire and *Pranita* jug. On the west to the north of the Fire, three *Kuśas* should be kept for purification; and a *Kuśa* having two blades only should also be there. Besides this there should be the *Prokṣhani Patra* (a pot containing water for sprinkling), a dish containing ghee, *Kuśas* for brushing, *Kuśas* with their

† While giving the daughter away, her father gives her and the bridegroom gold, silver, land and other things in the shape of dowry. The bride and the bridegroom next go down to the altar and are seated side by side in front of the sacrificial fire.

three blades matted together, small sticks of wood for making Fire, three wooden spoons, ghee for oblations, a pot filled with 256 handfuls of rice to be given as *Dakshina* to the Brahmā. All these things should be placed one after another preceded by the *Kuśas* by which the *Kuśas* is cut to make it into a *Pavitri*. Besides these all other necessary articles should be in readiness there, which may include some fried paddy from the husks, a flat stone, and a winnowing fan. The bride's brother and another man of stout physique should also wait near at hand to be of assistance. A *Kuśas* is then made into a *Pavitri* by cutting it by other Kuśas. Some water is dropped thrice into the *Prokṣhani* jug out of *Pranita* jug with the two *Pavitri* in the first, and the *Pavitris* being held between the thumb and forefinger of both the hands some water is sprinkled over the head for purification. Taking up the *Prokṣhani* jug on his left hand, he again sprinkles water in the above manner. The *Prokṣhani* jug is itself sprinkled over by the *Pranita* water; and all other things that may be lying there are also purified in the same way by this water. The *Prokṣhani* jug is then placed between the Fire and the *Pranita* jug. Some butter is put into the butter-pot and melted. Some burning bits of straw are stirred round into the ghee. The *Sruva* (wooden spoon) is heated and brushed by the *Kuśas* (kept there for the purpose) inwardly by their ends and outwardly by their tips; it is then wetted by the *Pranita*; and again having been heated three times should be put down on the *Kuśas* to the right. Some ghee should now be sprinkled over the head for purification. He takes the matted *Kuśas* in the left hand and thinking devoutly of Prajāpati (Lord of all created beings) he should throw silently ghee-besmeared sticks of wood into the fire. Taking his seat he sprinkles the *Prokṣhani* water over the fire. Putting down the two *Pavitris* in the *Pranita* jug and with his right thigh upside down, he offers an oblation of ghee with the *Sruva* (sacrificial ladle) into the fire which has already been kindled by the Brahmā. Twelve oblations beginning from *Aghar mantra* are then offered successively;

each time the remaining ghee in the *Sruva* being dropped into the *Prokṣhani Patra*. He mutters inaudibly, "Oblation to Prajāpati; this is for Prajāpati". Then the *Aghar* oblations, "Oblation to Indra; this is for Indra." "Oblation to Fire; this is for the Fire" "Oblation to Sōma; this is for Sōma." The latter two are called *Ajyabhāg*. Then the following oblations are offered with the verses: "Oblation for good to the Fire in the form of Gandharva, who is Truth and abode of Truth. May he protect our knowledge and manliness. Oblation to the Fire's Apsarās (Fairies) called Muda. Oblation for good to the Sun-Gandharva who joins day with night and pervades the Sāmaveda. May he protect our learning and manliness. Oblation to the Apsarās called 'Ayu' who are the rays of the Sun-Gandharva. Oblation for good to the Moon who is the Sun's ray called Sushumnā. May he protect our knowledge and manliness. Oblation to the Apsarās called Bhekurayas who are the planets of the Moon. Oblation for good to the ever-moving and omnipresent Wind-Gandharva. May he protect our knowledge and manliness. Oblation to the Apsarās called Oorjat which are the currents of the Wind-Gandharva. Oblation for good to the Jajna-Gandharva who takes care (of all creatures) and moves about graciously. May he protect our knowledge and manliness. Oblation to the Apsarās called Yayu which constitute the Dakshinā (fee given to the Brāhman for helping in the sacrifice) of the Yajna-Gandharva." "Oblation for good to the Lord of the created beings who is the moulder of the Universe and is its soul. May he protect our knowledge and manliness. Oblation to the Apsarās called Eshtio which form Rik and Sama rituals chanted by the Prajapati. Oblation to the Heart; it is for the heart. Oblation to Chittihi to Akutihi; to Akutihi to Vijñatam (that which has been learnt); to the mind; to the Shakkaris; to the Darsh (new moon light); to the Purnamāsa (full moon night); to the Great; to the Rathanthar; to Prajāpati (Lord of all created beings), the wrathful (when defeating hostile armies) who taught the Jaya formulas to the valiant

Indra. All beings reverently bow down to Prajāpati who carried away oblations offered to him." Now follow the Abhyatana formulae which are 18 in number : May Agni, the Lord of all the creatures; Indra, the Lord of the elders; Yama (Death), the Lord of the Earth; the Wind, who is the Lord of the firmament; the Sun, who is the master of the day; the Moon that of the planets; the Brihaspati, that of the Brāhmans; Mitra, of the eternal objects; Varuna, of the waters; the Sea, of the rivers and streams; the Crops, which are the lord of prosperity; Sōma, that of medicinal herbs; Savitri, that of fruits; Rudra, that of the cattle; Tvastri, of forms; Vishnu, that of the mountains; Maruts, the Lords of the hosts; may they protect me and the Brāhmā, and may the marriage ceremony pass off smoothly. May my grandfather and father and all other *pitris* (ancestors) afford me a similar protection." Again oblations are offered with these *Mantras* "May Agni, the premier God, come hither, with the permission of the King Varuna and liberate the offspring of this woman from Death's noose, so that she may not have to lament the loss of her sons. May Gārhapatya Agni (the Fire that presides over the destiny of the family), protect this woman and grant her such offsprings that may live a long life. May her lap be never empty and may all her children survive her. May she enjoy happiness on account of her sons. Oh Agni! thou art worthy of the sacrifice (that is performed in thine honour). May the whole earth and the Heaven be blissful to me. Let me have the choicest things of the earth and those of Heaven, i.e., the riches in various shape. Oh Agni! thou art the essence of the whole body of planets; come here showing us an easy path; give us a bright and undecaying life; may death go away and immortality bless us. May Yama (Death), Vivaswata's son, keep us out of danger." Here the *Pranita* water is touched. "Oh Yama! go back by the way which is the best of all and is not trodden on by other celestial beings. I pray that you, having eyes and ears capable of seeing and hearing every thing, should not destroy my progeny, not even my son. Satisfy

yourself by this oblation offered to you." Saying this, the *Pranita* water is touched. The bridegroom and the bride slowly rise up with their faces to the east when the bride's brother pours out into the hollow made by joining hands by the bride over that of the bridegroom, some fried grains besmeared with ghee, mixing some *sanu* leaves also. With these the girl offers oblations into the Fire, reciting the following *Mantras:* "This girl worships the sun in the form of Agni with a desire that she may never be separated from her husband." This woman, while throwing the fried grains into the Fire, says—" May my husband live long and my relatives prosper. I throw these grains into the Fire for your prosperity; may Agni grant that, you and I, may live together in harmony." Then the bridegroom takes hold of the bride's right hand and says: "I seize your hand for the sake of happiness; may you live to old age with me, your husband; the Gods, viz., Bhaga the Sun and Purandhi have given you to me for directing our household affairs." This I am, that art thou; that art thou, this I am; I am Sōma and thou art Rik, I am the sky and thou art the earth; come, let us marry and join in holy wedlock; let us beget offspring; let us acquire many sons: and may all of them reach old age. Devoted to each other and beautiful to look at, and with cheerful hearts, may we live for a 100 years and see for a 100 years and hear for a 100 years." This said, the bridegroom makes her tread with her right foot on a flat stone (that is laid on the northern side of the Fire) with this *Mantra:* "Tread on this stone; be firm like a stone, overwhelm those who think of arraying their forces against you; and rout those that have come with their forces." He also sings this song—" To-day I shall sing in praise of you, Oh Saraswati; thou art gracious and bountiful; the whole world dwells in thee: the song which I shall sing to-day will bestow the highest honour on women." Then the bridegroom with the bride before him, goes round the *Pranita* jug, the Brahmā and the Fire, while the bridegroom recites this *Mantra*—" Oh Fire, this girl of dazzling beauty was first married to you; grant now that she may marry a human being and let her be his wife for the sake of progeny."

The same rites are twice again gone through beginning from the fried grains. The remaining fried grains are poured into the fire with the words—"Oblation to Bhaga". She is led round for the fourth time; and the bridegroom offers oblations of *ghee* into the fire which are meant for Prajāpati, the *ghee* that remains over being poured into the Prokṣhani jug. Thereupon the bridegroom leads her on seven steps towards the north and at each step he recites this *Mantra:* "May Vishnu lead you to food by the first step; to strength by the second step; to riches by the third; to the source of happiness by the fourth; to cattle by the fifth; to six seasons of the year by the sixth; and by the seventh step Oh friend! be devoted to me by the grace of Vishnu." Then from a pitcher held over the shoulder by another, the bridegroom pours water through a bunch of mango leaves on to the bride's head, and recites the *Mantra:* "The blessed, the most blessed, the peaceful ones, provide medicine for thee." And again he does so with the Mantras: "Oh Sacred waters! ye are source of happiness; so with a liberal mind, provide food for us." "Waters! ye constitute the most blessed juice; allow us to share in it, like a doting mother." Then looking at the Sun and addressing the bride, he speaks thus,—"Having invoked the bright eye of the Divine Being that rises in the east, we wish to live, see and speak for a hundred years; and aye longer still." Then he asks her to see the Polar star, when the sun is about to set and says—"Oh bride! you are steady; live under my protection for ever. Since Brihashpati has given you to me, so live with me with children for a hundred years." On being asked thus, she should say "I see". He should then move his hand over her right shoulder and touch her heart and recites—"I take thy heart into my will; thy mind shall follow mine; you shall rejoice heartily in what I shall say; may Prajāpati join you to me." He adds—"This girl wears auspicious ornament; come and behold her. Having blessed her, go back to your place." Then a stout man lifts her up and places her on a red bull's hide in an out-of-the-way place that may be in an eastern or northern

direction with the *Mantra*—" Here may the cows sit down, here the horses and men may in the sacrifice in which a thousand Dakshinās are given occupy this place. Pushan may also sit here." Thereafter the Svistakrit Hóma is performed at the end of which the Brāhman gets his fee after which he walks round the fire and is given permission to go. Then, reciting the *Mantra* " May the Waters serve the purpose of a cure for our friends " he sprinkles some water over his head. He throws away the *Pranita* water in the south-west with the *Mantra* : " May the Water be unfriendly to him who hates us and is hated by us." He resumes his seat and draws some ashes by the Sruva and puts a mark on his forehead, neck, forearm and his heart by his forefinger, and also puts similar mark over the bride's forehead, neck, forearm and heart. Then he rubs vermillion over the bride's head. The bridegroom gives away some money as *Karma-Dakshinā, Sakalarista Prasaman Bhuyasī* for the completion of the marriage and for the destruction of evils and for general distribution. Subsequently the females of the house as also the male relations shower blessings on the married couple with *Doorbākshat* uttering *Mantras.* The couple then make obeisance to the Goddess of the house and are escorted to the ladies' apartments where they are received by the ladies and presents are made to them. Returning to the *Maṇḍap* he takes some *Doorākshat.* For the succeeding three nights they should eat no food containing salt; they should sleep on the ground ; and practice other observances to keep themselves pure.

The last part of the marriage ceremony which is called *Chaturthi* takes place on the fourth day. Early on that morning the couple bathe in the water preserved since the *Laj Hovan* of the first day. *Havan* is again performed this morning by the bridegroom with the bride by his side. The *Chaturthi* is a most important ceremony as it makes the man and the woman one and it represents the completion of the Vedic rites.

The following Mantras are used on this occasion :—

"Oh Fire! thou being the atonement for sins, thou art the expiation of Gods also. For this reason I, who am Brahman, approach thee with the prayer that thou wouldst destroy the effects of such inauspicious signs of this maiden which may bring death to her husband."

Similar Mantras are uttered invoking the assistance of Vāyu, Aditya Sōma and Gandharva with respect to inauspicious signs calculated to bring death to the offspring, and harm to the household, and to the good name of the husband.

"Oh Maiden! by this *Abhiṣheka* (sprinkling of holy water) I destroy the effects of such inauspicious signs as may bring death to thy husband, cattle, offspring and household. Then you shall live with me to old age. I unite my soul with thy soul. I unite my bones, flesh and skin with thine."

As said above, a Śrōtriya wishing to marry, does his best to marry in a *Laukik* higher than his own, or in a *Laukik* equal to his own in order that his rank may not suffer. But sometimes even one of the highest section is compelled to marry the lowest section of his class and for this he suffers. His relations are not only indifferent to the marriage, but try to stop it if they can. He has therefore to start for the marriage secretly and marry secretly. He also leaves the house of his father-in-law on the very first day after the marriage is performed without so much as taking his meal there and returns home with the bride secretly,—*Chaturthi* and other rites being performed at his own house. This kind of marriage is becoming very rare now.

After the *Chaturthi* ceremony is over, minor ceremonies take place and amongst them the *Dasout* which is an important one, is performed on the eve of the bridegroom's departure for home after the marriage days. Ten married ladies whose husbands are living entertain, bless and advise the married couple. The bridegroom is made to stand in front of the bride and one of the ten ladies does first *Nichhabar*, i.e., moves round the bridegroom's head and face a lighted lamp made of powdered rice and *sindur* and a red-coloured wick and throws it behind him wiping

off as it were all the evil influences to which he may be subject and she then applies sandal-wood paste to his forehead, collyrium to his eyes, gives him some water for *Achman* (sips) and for drink, some betel leaves for use and rings a musical box near his ears. He is then made to do *Sindur-dān*, i.e., rub vermillion over the head of the bride. All this is done by each of the ten married ladies separately one after another uttering benedictions couched in verses which are to the effect that the married couple may remain faithful and attached to each other for ever like Rāma and Sitā, Mahādeva and Gouri, Indra and Sachi and so forth; that the bride who is a mere toy in the house of the ladies be the mistress of her husband's house blessed with happiness and every success in life.

The marriage ceremonies and rituals as described above excepting the *Uchhati* and the marriage performed without the consent of the bridegroom's relations are peculiar and restricted to the Śrōtriya class are prevalent more or less in all the four classes of the Maithil Brāhmans. The difference is in the manner and the scale on which the ceremonies can be performed having regard to the means of the parties.

In order to facilitate the marriage of the Maithil Brāhmans, periodical meetings (*Sabhās*) attended by authorized genealogists are held during the *Shuddha* (sacred days) at different centres such as the villages Saurath, Partapur, Sajhuar, Bhakhrail, Sahasaula, Bangāon and Govindpur-Harrahi of the Darbhānga, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur and Purnea districts respectively, where thousands and thousands of Maithil Brāhmans flock and such of them as wish to marry consult the genealogical registers and having obtained the *Aswajan Patra* from the *Panjiārs*, proceed to the dwelling houses of the bridal party and have the marriage performed in accordance with the *Shāstras* and the Maithil customs. It is impossible for all the Maithil Brāhmans who are several lakhs in number, to get the services of the genealogists who form a very limited class at their homes and it is possible to get them only at large gatherings where they have all their ancient records at hand.

The negotiation and settlement of the marriage of a bride and a bridegroom belonging to the Srōtriya class never take place at the above *Sābhas.* The Srotriyas have all along *Gharkhatha* (home negotiation) i.e., the negotiation and settlement done at home. They are so small in number that they can very well manage them at home. The Maithils of the other three classes have also *Gharkhatha* but they cannot do without the *Sabhās* inasmuch as their number is very large and they are variously circumstanced. As a matter of fact, even for centuries after the enforcement of the marriage rules of Rājā Harsingh Deva, the negotiations and settlement of the marriage of all the four classes of the Maithil Brāhmans took place at their homes. The *Sabhā-Gachhis,* i.e., the fixed places of the *Sabhās,* are of comparatively recent growth. A *Sabhā-Gachhi* of the village Saurath, which is the oldest of all the other *Sabha-Gachhis,* is about the centre of Mithilā, being four miles away from Madhubani, district Darbhāngā.

In and about that village lived and taught eminent Paṇḍits who were authorities also in the genealogical matters. It was natural therefore that the *Sabhā-Gachhi* at Saurath was selected first as the best place for the Maithils to assemble and consult the genealogical records, negotiate and settle the marriage after examining the intended bridegroom in *Shāstras* at an open place under the trees which was considered suitable for administration of justice in good old days.

It is a matter of pride to the Maithils that the *Shāstric* injunctions are so strictly followed and that before a marriage is settled, the absence of the relationship is so scrupulously ascertained in the presence of the Paṇḍits, other authorities and the public, that there is no chance left for an objectionable marriage to take place—objectionable in respect of the *S'hāstras* and the *Sanatan Dharma*—which the Maithil value most.